

## Are We Asking Too Much of the U.N.?

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As efforts go forward to secure independence for East Timor, autonomy in Kosovo and sustainable peace in Bosnia, many have expressed frustration at the slow deployment of United Nations staff and peacekeepers, and at the quibbling over the limits of institutional power and mandates. But the real question is whether the U.N. is up to the new challenge of these post-Cold War conflicts—the challenge of building new nations.

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The U.N. is no stranger to tough problems. For more than 20 years, the two of us—one as president of the International Rescue Committee and the other an international lawyer—have watched, and often admired, the U.N.'s response to wars and humanitarian catastrophes spanning the world from the killing fields of Cambodia to the burning buildings of Dili.

If the world is to combat such horrors and pursue the 50-year-old goal of universal human rights—a goal in which the two of us strongly believe—then individual states must put faith and financial support in an organization that will supersede their strategic self-interest. U.N.

opponents, who have long argued that the body should not act as a world government, will object. But, while less than perfect, the U.N. is the only global mechanism for effective collaboration in circumstances where states are reluctant or ill-placed to act alone.

Much more is expected of the U.N. today than simply providing a buffer between former combatants. The new mission is more often than not to promote the responsibilities of statehood. If the future of the U.N. is to be a builder of new states or a repairer of failed ones, then it must be given better tools for the job. So far, bureaucratic shortcomings within the U.N. system and the lack of political and financial commitments by member states have been serious obstacles. The United States should delay no longer in paying the \$1.3 billion it owes in dues.

Before the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping operations responded primarily to conflicts between states. In recent years, peacekeeping operations have had to address conflicts *within* states. These new forms of internal conflict bring to light the inadequacy of traditional peacekeeping methods and challenge the international community to devise new and more effective methods of establishing lasting stability.

In response to these new political realities, peacekeeping has grown rapidly in size and scope. Before 1988, there were 13 U.N. peacekeeping operations; since 1988, there have been 36; counting the new U.N. mission to East Timor (UNAMET), there are now 17. In January 1988, there were approximately 11,000 peacekeepers deployed. During the early 1990s, deployment peaked at almost 80,000 with annual expenditures of more than \$3 billion.

The model for traditional peacekeeping was provided by the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), which was established in 1956 to manage the aftermath of the Suez crisis. It required the consent of the parties in conflict

and was intended to deal with disputes between states. Subsequent peacekeeping operations have generally been modest in size and have involved the deployment of lightly armed forces to monitor cease-fires and oversee troop withdrawals, usually for a transitional period of months. (There are some striking exceptions, including UNTSO, the force that was sent to the Middle East in 1948, that have become intractable problems lasting for decades.)

Since the late 1980s, however, peacekeeping operations have taken on political, social and economic elements that require relief specialists and civilian experts. They are designed not only to oversee the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements but to introduce lasting democratic political systems. While disarmament, demobilization and monitoring of cease-fires remain important components, operations must now include promoting political reconciliation, reconstruction and building civil society. Recent peacekeeping efforts such as UNMIK in Kosovo or UNMIBH in Bosnia involve providing massive humanitarian assistance, monitoring human rights, training police, establishing a judicial system, regulating elections and overseeing the repatriation of refugees.

These new responsibilities have prompted debate about U.N. reform, but produced only modest bureaucratic changes. Since 1992, following the crisis of Kurdish refugees from Iraq, the U.N. has tried to improve its ability to respond to humanitarian emergencies. Its first move was to create a Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) within the U.N. secretariat aimed at coordinating the allocation of responsibilities among the various U.N. agencies.

This effort was abandoned just five years later when DHA's role was reduced essentially to an advisory one. Now known as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), it is headed by one of the U.N.'s most respected senior officials. But OCHA has been unable to meet the new opera-